

column on the subject to Firehouse magazine. He also composed numerous articles on the subject in other publications and on the internet, and helped bring attention to these important issues to Americans across the country.

Hal's passion and tenaciousness made him a highly effective advocate for firefighters and fire safety. A charter member of the National Fallen Firefighter's Foundation, he served as the organization's Chairman from 1999 until his retirement in 2008. In this position, he helped to develop fire safety programs and to create a safer environment for firefighters. He was also the Director of the Chevy Chase Fire Department in Maryland. It was truly an honor for me to work closely with Hal as we sought ways that the federal government could assist our local fire departments even before the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. Together, we developed the Assistance To Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs to help these local departments buy the equipment and hire the personnel they needed to keep their communities safe and secure. Thanks in large part to Hal's insightful input and tireless advocacy, these programs have been wildly successful, and are crucial to ensuring that our communities have the resources they need.

Homeland security starts at home, so no matter what our budget environment is like, we must continue to support firefighters and other first responders, who sacrifice so much to keep us safe. This will undoubtedly be one of Hal's great legacies, and I will continue to fight to preserve it in the future.

With Hal Bruno's passing, our nation has lost a great hero. Mr. Bruno is survived by his wife Meg, his sister Barbara, his sons Harold and Dan, and his four grandchildren. The job of a United States Congressman involves much that is rewarding, yet nothing compares to working with passionate individuals like Hal Bruno. Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join our colleagues, Hal's family and friends, our first responders, and me in commemorating and celebrating the life of Mr. Hal Bruno.

RECOGNIZING HARLEEN JASSAL
OF CLIFTON, VA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Harleen Jassal, a 2011 Critical Language Scholarship Program Recipient. Harleen has been identified by her educators for her academic excellence, leadership potential and exemplary citizenship to participate in the Critical Language Scholarship Program in Chandigarh, India.

This Critical Language Scholarship Program allows students to participate in daily educational activities in Chandigarh, India, as well as the surrounding areas. The program allows participants to make friends with young leaders from all over the world with an intensive focus on the Punjabi language, one of the thirteen critical need foreign languages determined by the Department of State, for summer 2012. At the end of the program, participants receive a certificate of completion.

Harleen is a student at the George Mason University. It is inspiring to see young people

who are interested in educational and developmental experiences such as these.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this remarkable achievement by Harleen Jassal and wishing her continued success in her further pursuits.

CONSOLIDATED AND FURTHER
CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS
ACT 2012, H.R. 2112

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act 2012 (H.R. 2112). This legislation combines three fiscal year 2012 appropriations measures: Agriculture; Commerce-Justice-Science; and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. H.R. 2112 also includes a short-term continuing resolution that will fund the remainder of the federal government through December 16.

H.R. 2112 represents the final House-Senate conference agreement on three of this year's twelve appropriations bills. While I strongly oppose many of the cuts to critical priorities included in H.R. 2112, the final package is—on the whole—far better than the proposals from Tea Party Republicans in the House.

Fiscal year 2012 appropriations for the Agriculture, Rural Development and Food and Drug Administration are significantly improved from the House-passed bill. The Women, Infants and Children program receives \$6.6 billion, an increase of \$570 million over the House bill and \$36 million above the Senate. As a result, 700,000 low-income children and pregnant women in America will not lose the basic nutrition they desperately need and deserve. The conference agreement provides \$1 billion for food safety inspections, which will protect America's food supply by preventing the elimination of USDA meat inspectors. Food safety in our country is further strengthened by the \$2.5 billion included for the Food and Drug Administration. This \$334 million increase over the House level will allow the FDA to continue implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act. Funding was also restored for international food aid programs that fulfill America's moral obligation to assist millions of men, women and children around the world who are struggling with famine.

However, I am deeply disappointed that a handful of special interest groups succeeded in blocking important improvements to school nutrition standards that were recommended by the USDA. As a result, it will be harder for school districts to increase the use of whole grains, reduce the sodium content of school lunches and end the ridiculous practice of categorizing pizza as a vegetable. Every student in every American school knows pizza is not a vegetable. With this bill, Congress is failing our students and parents by allowing corporate interests to trump common sense. With this bill, we are missing an opportunity to substantially improve the health of America's children. This is a wrong that must be made right.

My Republican colleagues also won a victory for Wall Street criminals by demanding

cuts to the entity responsible for enforcing financial laws. H.R. 2112 includes \$100 million less for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) than requested by President Obama to carry out the financial reforms passed by Congress. Reckless behavior in America's financial sector has destroyed millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in education and retirement savings. It is unconscionable that House Republicans would undermine the ability of federal regulators to protect American families from a repeat of the 2008 crisis that nearly triggered a second Great Depression. Unfortunately, Congressional Republicans refused to yield. The result is a bill that leaves our country exposed to a repeat of this crisis.

Fiscal year 2012 Appropriations for Commerce-Science-Justice will enhance U.S. global competitiveness by making critical investments in science and technology. Overall, H.R. 2112 includes \$490 million more for these priorities than the bill proposed by the House Republicans. As a result, the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration receive funding to conduct research that spurs innovation and drives future economic growth. In addition, the legislation provides \$128 million for the Manufacturing Extension and Partnership Program, which helps American companies maintain good paying American jobs and compete with manufacturers in China, India, and other leading economies. And H.R. 2112 reverses the House Republican's massive cuts to firefighters, state and local law enforcement agencies, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For example, the Commerce-Justice-Science bill passed by House Republicans eliminated funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program that helps Minnesota keep police officers on our streets. This bill provides \$198.5 million for COPS.

Fiscal year 2012 appropriations for Transportation, Housing and Urban Development fall short of what is needed to strengthen America's economy and stabilize our communities. Yet, the conference agreement does succeed in maintaining current levels of investment in most areas. For example, H.R. 2112 includes \$39.8 billion for the federal-aid highway program, \$12.1 billion more than the House draft bill and a level consistent with the annual funding assumed in the surface transportation extension act. The agreement also includes \$10.5 billion for transit programs, \$2.5 billion more than the House draft bill. This translates into \$93.1 million for construction of the Central Corridor Light Rail line. While replacing the massive cuts to transit proposed by House Republicans is an achievement, the final agreement falls \$5 million short of the federal commitment to the Central Corridor project. This shortfall is a major concern and something that must be addressed in the upcoming fiscal year 2013 process. Another concern is the complete elimination of funding for high-speed rail. Ideological opposition to rail investments from House Republicans will slow work on the planned Chicago-to-Twin Cities high-speed-rail route that will depart from St. Paul's Union Depot. However, the conference agreement did include \$1.4 billion for Amtrak capital and operating grants and removed onerous House language that would have eliminated Amtrak service on 26 short-distance routes, affecting 15 states and more than 9 million passengers.